

17. A NEW RECORD OF THE ASSAM ROOFED TURTLE
KACHUGA SYLHETENSIS (JERDON) FROM THE MANAS
 WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, ASSAM

Since little is known about the turtles of Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, we are maintaining a small collection of live turtles at Bansbari range office. On 24 December, 1987, I, along with some forest guards had been on a routine patrol in the Uchila-Rabang areas of the sanctuary. While looking for turtles in a small river, we came across an unusual variety of turtle which was later identified as the Assam Roofed Turtle or Khasi Hill Terrapin *Kachuga sylhetensis* (Jerdon). Daniel (1983) has mentioned that this uncommon species is known only from the hills of Meghalaya and Nagaland and its habits are unknown. According to Das (1985) it is also found in Cachar Hills of Assam and extralimitally in Bangladesh. He writes that it probably lives in ponds and hill streams and it is a rare species with no recent record from the country.

Location and Habitat: The specimen was found in the shallow waters of Rupahi river (a tributary of river Pohumara) in the Manas Wildlife Sanctuary. The water level at the site was approximately 35 cm. and it was full of debris from uprooted trees. The Rupahi river passes through grassland plain (elevation approx. 60 m. above MSL) with few trees along its bank.

Description: Carapace domed or elevated with the third vertebral shield forming a projecting spike. Thirteen pairs of marginal shields give a strongly serrated look to the

posterior end of the carapace. Shell olive-brown above with paler keel. Plastron yellow with each shield having a large dark brown blotch. Digits fully webbed. Head and legs brown with a yellow wavy stripe along the head and another along the lower jaw. Neck with light streaks. Shell length 89.5 mm, breadth 66.5 mm. Weight 93.5 g.

Notes on Behaviour in Captivity: The turtle has been kept in a large, well ventilated enclosure with some natural grassland vegetation growing inside. A man-made mound with a hole and a small pool are also provided. The turtle usually hides among the vegetation or in the bottom of the pool or even in the hole during daytime. It can swim very well and remains under water without surfacing for several minutes.

It is a voracious feeder of tiny freshwater fish offered to it on the ground. It prefers the softer ones and shuns varieties with hard or sharp external spines. It generally eats at night. It does not touch the ripe fruits (peeled banana and papaya) or tender wheat and grass shoots.

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18. ON THE INDENTITY AND OCCURRENCE OF THE PEACOCK SOFT-SHELL (*TRIONYX HURUM* GRAY) IN RAJASTHAN

On 23 August, 1986 while sampling the fishes in Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, we got a turtle along with the fishes, which was later identified as peacock soft-shell (*Trionyx hurum*).

Subsequently twenty specimens of this species were collected and the morphological features were recorded. As described elsewhere (Smith 1933, Pritchard 1979, Daniel 1983), this soft-shell had dark olive green to black carapace with numerous yellow spots and blotches. Young ones had well defined ocelli on the carapace and the plastron was grey. The head was olive green with numerous yellow spots with a more prominent one behind the eyes.

The species differed from the Ganges soft-shell (*Trionyx gangeticus*) in its dark carapace, four well defined ocelli and grey plastron in the young, black eyes (yellow or white cornea in Ganges soft-shell), wart-like tuber-

cles in the posterior end of the mid dorsal line of the bony carapace, and the presence of yellow spots in the head. (three oblique black lines behind the eyes in Ganges soft-shell).

Until the recent past, the known range of peacock soft-shell was the lower reaches of Ganges and Brahmaputra (Smith 1933, Pritchard 1979, Daniel 1983, Murthy 1985). Recently this species has been recorded from Pune region (Varghese and Tonapi 1986) and from Bhopal (Indraneil Das, personal communication) which are far away from its previously known range. This is the first record from Rajasthan. An intensive survey is required to ascertain the status and possible distribution of this elegant turtle.

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